

Winter 2006

University of Michigan

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HISTORY 323: THE FRENCH ENLIGHTENMENT

Course description

In this class we will explore the Enlightenment as a site of contestation on two levels: as a lively community that developed in France in the eighteenth century and thrived on debate about its own practices and about the world in which it operated; and as the very controversial site of current debates on the origins of modernity and its influence on the world in which we live. While this is a course primarily in the intellectual history of eighteenth-century France, it is set in the context of two cultures and societies on which the Enlightenment sheds light: that of France before the French Revolution and our own. Through primary source readings, discussions, and lectures, students will gain an understanding of the French Enlightenment as part of and a critical response to French society, politics, and culture before the French Revolution, including education, social order, the family, gender relations, colonialism, and consumer society. Through readings in secondary sources students will be introduced to current debates about the Enlightenment. Students will be asked to think about the ways in which the Enlightenment shapes the modern world and the contribution of the Enlightenment to their own way of thinking.

Questions we will explore include:

- How have different historians understood and conceptualized the Enlightenment? To what degree has the Enlightenment itself shaped the way we are able to think about it?
- Who participated in the Enlightenment and what were the social and intellectual practices in which they engaged?
- How did Enlightenment writers respond critically to the politics, society, and culture, of the eighteenth century? How has that critique shaped society, culture and politics since the Enlightenment? How does it remain relevant or useful today?
- What roles did women play in the Enlightenment? How were issues of gender addressed?
- How does the Enlightenment continue to shape the way in which we think about our world? What are the limits of Enlightenment and the problems it raises?

Course Requirements

Attendance at lectures and participation in discussions based on readings

1 written question or response for each class discussion*

5-page take-home midterm essay exam

10-12 page term paper

*Some days I will pose a discussion question in advance. You may either write a response to it (1 page or less), or write your own question for the class to discuss. Discussion questions must be brought to class and turned in. They should not be questions asking for information (e.g.: Did Voltaire's pleas on behalf of the Calas family change the outcome of their case?); nor should they be quiz questions that require a correct answer (e.g.: What reasons did Voltaire give for the innocence of the Calas?). Rather, good questions raise points or issues that the class can discuss, and that you think it should discuss to get at the main ideas in or raised by the readings. Good questions can be comparative and may relate back to previous readings. Although not always necessary, it can be useful to take a specific passage from the reading as the basis for your question. *Discussion days are marked on the schedule by an asterisk (*). You must turn in a discussion question or response on each of these days.*

Grading

Written assignments will be evaluated on the basis of how well they address the topic, question, or problem posed. The quality of the paper resides in the clarity, organization, and force of the prose, as well as the use of evidence and originality of argument.

Term paper	40%
Take-home Midterm	25%
Attendance & Discussion	25%
Discussion Questions	10%

Books available for purchase at Shaman Drum Bookshop

Goodman and Wellman, *The Enlightenment* (Houghton-Mifflin)

Graffigny, *Letters of a Peruvian Woman* (MLA Texts and Translations)

Mercier, *Panorama of Paris*, ed. Popkin (Penn State Press)

Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality* (Hackett)

Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts: Letter to M. D'Alembert on the Theatre* (Cornell UP)

Voltaire, *Treatise on Tolerance and Other Writings* (Cambridge)

Readings marked (eCR) are available through electronic course reserves:

<http://www.lib.umich.edu/reserves/>

Find articles from the Encyclopedia of Diderot and d'Alembert (marked ED) at:

<http://www.hti.umich.edu/d/did/>

SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

Jan 5	Introduction
Jan 10	Eighteenth-Century France <u>Reading:</u> ED: “France”
Jan 12*	What is the Enlightenment? <u>Reading:</u> Goodman & Wellman, Introduction and chap. 1
Jan 17	The Encyclopedic Enlightenment <u>Reading:</u> ED: “Encyclopedia,” “Cowl,” and “Grey Friars,”
Jan 19*	The Encyclopedic Enlightenment (cont.) <u>Readings:</u> ED: “Agnus Scythicus,” “Intolerance,” “Intolerant Man,” “Jew,” “Lesbian,” “Prejudice,” “Scandalous,” “Sodomy,” Tailor of Suits,” “Tailor of Suits (Plates),” “Virginity,” “Zenicon”
Jan 24*	Who were the Philosophes? <u>Reading:</u> Goodman & Wellman, chap. 2
Jan 26*	Enlightenment Science <u>Reading:</u> Goodman and Wellman, chap. 4 (skip Shapin and Porter) ED: “Alchemy,” “Science,” “World”
Jan 31*	Enlightenment Epistemology <u>Reading:</u> Diderot, <i>Letter on the Blind</i> (eCR; 2 parts)
Feb 2*	Institutions of Enlightenment <u>Reading:</u> Goodman & Wellman, chap. 3 ED: “Sociable, Urbane”
Feb 7*	Enlightenment Paris <u>Reading:</u> Mercier, <i>Panorama of Paris</i>
Feb 9	Visit to Special Collections in Hatcher Library for hands-on presentation of Enlightenment books
Feb 14	Voltaire’s Enlightenment: <i>Ecrasez l’infâme!</i> <u>Reading:</u> Voltaire, <i>Treatise on Tolerance</i>
Feb 16*	Voltaire’s Enlightenment: <i>Ecrasez l’infâme!</i> (cont.)
Feb 19	<u>Take-Home Midterm due over Ctools by midnight</u>
Feb 21	Rousseau’s Enlightenment
Feb 23*	Rousseau’s Enlightenment (cont.) <u>Reading:</u> Rousseau, <i>Discourse on Inequality</i>

